

## REVIEWS.

*Man's Moral Nature.* By R. M. BUCKE, M.D., Medical Superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane, London, Ontario. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons; Toronto, Willing & Williamson; London, England, Trubner & Co. Cloth, \$1.50.

In poetry, literature, history and science, Canada has produced her several authors in some of whom our young country has an honest and well deserved pride, but never before has any of her sons ventured upon the domain of speculative and practical philosophy. When John Locke wrote his "Essay on the Human Understanding" there was something singularly appropriate in the selection of his subject by the frail Doctor, and it has ever seemed to us that, whenever a scientific consideration of man's moral or intellectual nature is desired, the physician who has so intimately acquainted himself with the physical system should be well qualified to speak with accuracy. The work before us amply sustains this belief, for in it the relation of the emotions to the intellect which has so long baffled non-professional metaphysicians is by this medical author put so clearly that the every-day reader can easily understand it. To our medical readers the work would commend itself were there no other attractions than the original observations on the function of the Great Sympathetic. Dr. Bucke proves, by well grounded and logical argument, that the moral nature of man has its seat in the Great Sympathetic, as certainly as the intellectual has its home in the cerebro-spinal nervous system, and we have no doubt from the clearness of his proof that our leading physiologists will, in their next editions, incorporate his concise views in their text books, and our professors in our schools of medicine will now no longer have to say to their classes that very little or nothing is known of the function of this great nervous system.

The author's style is decidedly laconic, and with the wide range of thought and comprehensive consideration of the conditions of our existence, it is impossible to give a just and intelligent summary of his work; only a transcription of the text *in extenso* would comprise an adequate review. A few points may, however, be hinted at by the reviewer, but the allusion

to them must of necessity be so vague that the reader cannot readily grasp the line of argument. The three natures of man, namely, the active, intellectual, and moral, are duly considered, and their separate and conjoined relationships to the external world and to each other, with the changes which are ever resulting from the principles of evolution, form the groundwork of the book. The characteristics of mankind are traced from the "infant" to the last stage, "second childishness and mere oblivion," and the time and manner of the development of the various emotions are plainly set forth. The author shows that the social relationships of our race are calculated to improve its members—men are gradually growing better—that the good live longer than the bad—the married longer than the single—the fat longer than the lean—and the wise longer than the foolish.

An important section of the book is devoted to the reconciliation of apparently conflicting religious beliefs, and the author's analysis of the phenomena attending religious conversions is the most complete and reasonable we have seen. On page 138 he says:—"Every new religion derives its authority from, and establishes its hold upon man by the fact that it represents a moral advance, that it is a projection into the unknown of a superior and more assured hope; \* \* \* \* for no people or nation having attained a certain degree of assurance as to the friendliness to mankind of the governing power of the universe will follow the man who tells them that it is less friendly than they thought it." Again on page 146:—"From this time (11th century B.C.) to the era of the foundation of Christianity a more or less steady elevation of the moral nature of the Jews took place, an elevation evidenced by the sublime compositions of the prophets, until the last great step made by this people was taken by Jesus, and men were made to feel, and through their feelings to see, that the old awful Jehovah, that jealous God who visited the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, was in reality 'our Father who art in Heaven.'"

The formation and growth of what is called by the world "conscience" is shown while tracing the early moral impressions of the child and their later development. Also the influence and spread of moral contagion, either good or evil,